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SERVICE

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE · OFFICE OF INFORMATION · WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

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FOOD IN THE NEWS

CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS

Who Complains When Food Prices Go Down? In September 1963, beef prices were at a high point from which they began to fall. This decline lasted 10 months. Then beef prices began the rise to current high levels. Why do beef prices vary so? U. S. Department of Agriculture economists report that at present it's basically a problem of supply. When beef prices are down, farmers find it difficult to make a profit and cut cattle production. Consumers who like beef well enough to pay more for the limited supply bid the price up. Supplies currently are below a year ago. Similar factors contribute to higher pork prices. Beef, pork and lamb prices are not likely to decline much in the next few months. This is also the season when food prices usually tend to be higher. Retail food prices generally increase about 2 percent through winter and spring before beginning to decline around the end of July and on into the months of fall harvest. Despite fluctuations food is still expected to take even a smaller part of take-home pay in 1965, less than the 18.5 percent in 1964.

What's Ahead In Food Prices. "Specials" at the meat counter may not be as frequent this summer. Take advantage of them when they are offered. Buy several cuts for the freezer. Remember, only 25 percent of an entire beef carcass goes into steak. For variety and budget stretching try some other cuts, says the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Not much change in poultry prices -- still reasonable and abundant. Broilers are likely to be lower priced the second half of the year. Egg prices for the first six months of 1965 are below a year ago, but will show their usual seasonal price rise in the second half. What about vegetables? Fresh vegetables have been in light supply so far, due mostly to bad weather. Prices have been high for most, particularly lettuce. More vegetables will be coming to market in July, and prices are expected to decline. High priced potatoes. Reason is small carryover from last season and too few early potatoes to fill the need. Shoppers will find abundant supplies for late summer and fall, with prices down considerably.



SMART SHOPPER

Plentiful for July. An abundance of fresh plums is indicated for July, notes the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Be sure to take advantage of other locally grown or seasonally plentiful fruits and vegetables. USDA says frozen orange concentrate, milk and dairy products, fresh peaches, and watermelons will also be plentiful.

NEW FOODS

Milk With A Fresh-Fruit Flavor. Have you ever thought to ask the milkman to deliver apple, cherry, or strawberry flavored milk? Scientists at Milan, Italy, have developed the first completely natural fruit-milk concentrate without use of commercial additives as stabilizers. Apple or quince pulp have been the most successful, mixed with a high percentage of milk. The pectin in the fruit is the natural stabilizer. The combinations store well in addition to having the nutrients of skim milk and the fresh-fruit taste. This research was financed by foreign currencies received by the U. S. from the sale of surplus agricultural products. Restrictions prevent converting the foreign currencies to dollars, but they can be used to finance research benefiting U. S. agriculture.

A Peach of a Drink. What happens to peaches too ripe to ship to market? Usually they are wasted. But now, a peach drink with all the flavor and aroma of fresh peaches has been developed by scientists of the Georgia Agricultural Experiment Station, in cooperation with the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The riper peaches are desirable for the new drink because both color and flavor are at their best. In preliminary tests, consumers preferred the new peach drink above six other fruit drinks, but rated it slightly below concentrated orange juice. The product is ready to drink after adding an equal amount of water. Undiluted it can be used as topping for ice cream, desserts, salads, and other foods. The product is not yet on the market.

Low-fat Milk Becoming Popular Drink. Weight watching by consumers and the high nutritional value and acceptable taste of low-fat milk, sometimes called "two percent" milk, is making this new drink increasingly popular, reports U. S. Department of Agriculture. Sales of low-fat milk rose an estimated 24 percent in 1963 over the previous year, exceeding gains in sales of regular skim milk. USDA reports sales may triple by 1970. Low-fat milk usually contains about 2 percent butterfat and 10 percent nonfat solids. Whole milk, in contrast, has about 3.5 percent butterfat and 8.5 percent nonfat solids.

FOOD HINT

Secret to Egg Cookery. For best eating quality, eggs should be cooked with low to moderate heat, for just the right length of time--never overcooked. This applies whether you are cooking eggs in water, frying pan, or oven. For many other useful ideas on preparing eggs, write for a single free copy of USDA's new bulletin, Eggs in Family Meals, (H.G.103). Address your postcard to the Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., 20250.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

How to Beautify the Landscape. Wherever man's hand alters the appearance of the landscape, we have an obligation to retain and restore natural beauty, Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman said recently, in announcing a new "how-to-do-it" booklet on land beautification. The American Outdoors--Management for Beauty and Use is designed to help land planners and managers in their local programs. The booklet includes a section on planting to hide unsightly areas; to provide sound barriers near airports and highways; and to control drifting snow and soil. It tells where to get trees, how and when to plant them, and how big they get. The same information is provided for shrubs, plants, and flowers. Copies are available for 55 cents from Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 20402.

You, Agriculture, and the Facts. Eating habits, food grading, food marketing costs, the School Lunch Program, price supports, farm workers, the family farm, natural resources, and explanations of modern agriculture are among many topics of interest to consumers in the Fact Book of U. S. Agriculture. The Fact Book has been published by the Department as a handy reference for anyone who writes or talks about agriculture in the broadest sense. USDA has many statistical and specialized publications, but this is the first summary, within one cover, of the total agricultural complex. Single copies are available to editors and writers. Send a post card request to: Editor, SERVICE. Others may buy copies at 75 cents from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 20402.

Protecting Shade Trees from Construction Damage. Loss of shade trees during construction of a house can reduce value of the property, as well as rob you of the enjoyment of a cook-out or comfortable rest in the shade of a tree in your yard. Protecting Shade Trees During Home Construction (H.G.104), a bulletin published recently by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, offers the advice you may need on selecting the right trees for saving and protecting them from damage. To obtain a single free copy of this bulletin, send a post card request to the Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., 20250.

PROGRAM AID

New Slide Set and Filmstrip on Choosing Food. Decisions! Decisions! What meals should we have next week? What does the family like? What are their nutritional needs? Selecting and Buying Food for the Young Family, a 36-frame filmstrip or slide set with script which has been produced by U. S. Department of Agriculture, helps to answer some of these questions. The slide set may be purchased for \$5.50 from the Photography Division, Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., 20250. For the filmstrip, send check or money order for \$5.00 to Photo Lab, Inc., 3825 Georgia Avenue, N.W., Washington, D. C., 20011.

RECREATION

Mystery Grass for Golf Greens. Though of uncertain origin, a new bermuda-grass called Tifdwarf shows promise of providing a smoother putt for golfers and easier maintenance by golfcourse superintendents. Preliminary studies indicate it could surpass Tifgreen, the top golf-green grass in the South since its release in 1956. Scientists of USDA and the Georgia Coastal Plain Experiment Station "discovered" Tifdwarf when it was crowding out some grass in test plantings of Tifgreen. Blades of this new variety hug the ground so closely that a number of them never are cut by a mower set to a 3/16-inch height. Tests show that it should require less mowing and less fertilization than Tifgreen to maintain a smooth, attractive surface. Tifdwarf has been released officially to qualified nurserymen through the Georgia Crop Improvement Association and similar outlets in other states.

How Much Disinfectant for Swimming Pools? A quicker and more accurate method for measuring effectiveness of chlorine, bromine, and iodine type disinfectants for swimming pools is available this summer to Federal, State, and municipal officials, says the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The new method, developed by USDA scientists, measures the effect of the disinfectant in terms of how long it takes to kill bacteria. Previous methods merely measured how much disinfectant was in the water. Nearly a billion dollars of swimming pool chemicals were sold last year, according to industry reports. More than 500 products carry directions on their labels for swimming pool disinfectants. These products and their labels must be registered with the Department for evaluation before they are sold interstate. USDA determines the effectiveness of the product and verifies that proper instructions and precautionary statements are included on its label.

BEAUTIFICATION

Youthful Zest for Natural Beauty. To enlist the enthusiasm, the spirit and energy of our Nation's youth in the campaign to beautify the countryside and our cities, Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman joined recently with Miss Luci Baines Johnson to launch a national "Youth for Natural Beauty" program. When looking for new ideas and new approaches, the Secretary says he looks to people who are young--or to people who think young. He points out that many 4-H club members, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, and other youth groups already have become involved in projects to beautify the countryside, such as planting flowers, trees and shrubs, promoting conservation and beautification through posters, painting of old buildings, and cleaning litter from the roadside. To help leaders of youth groups, community organizations, and clubs in carrying out beautification projects, the Department of Agriculture is preparing a packet of information materials for distribution by mid-summer.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer, rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write, SERVICE, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., 20250.